

WHAT CONGRESS AND GANDHI HAVE DONE TO THE UNTOUCHABLES

APPENDICES

[Appendix VI : Recognition of Untouchables as a Separate Element](#)

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RECOGNITION OF UNTOUCHABLES AS A SEPARATE ELEMENT

Pronouncements of the British Government on the position of the Untouchables in the Constitution of India,

INTRODUCTION

The necessity for recalling the pronouncements of the Viceroys and of the Secretaries of State has arisen because of the recent criticism in the Press against the reply of 15th August 1944 given by Lord Wavell to Mr. Gandhi stating that the Scheduled Castes are a separate element in the national life of India and that their consent to the new Constitution was essential before power is transferred to Indian hands. This criticism is based upon the supposition that the Cripps's proposals did not recognise the Scheduled Castes as a separate element and did not make their consent necessary. Reliance is placed 'upon the fact that the Cripps's proposals spoke of "racial and religious minorities" only and it is argued that the Scheduled Castes are neither a racial nor a religious minority.

It is hardly necessary to point out how ignorant this criticism is. The Scheduled Castes are really a religious minority. The Hindu religion by its dogma of untouchability has separated the Scheduled Castes from the main body of the Hindus in a manner which makes the separation far more real and far wider than the separation which exists either between Hindus and Muslims or Hindus and Sikhs or Hindus and Christians. It is difficult to concede of a more effective method of separation and segregation than the principle of untouchability and it is only those who are actuated by malicious spirit of finding excuses to deny the Scheduled Castes their claim to political rights would indulge in this kind of jugglery. Those who regard the statement of Lord Wavell as a new departure have completely forgotten what attitude His Majesty's Government has taken in the matter of the Scheduled Castes from the very beginning when the transfer of political power from British to Indian hands was thought of. Ever since 1917 when the Montagu-Chelmsford Report advocated responsible Government, the

British Government have taken a definite stand that they would, under no circumstances, transfer power to Indian hands until they were satisfied that the position of the Scheduled Castes was safeguarded by adequate Constitutional provisions. A few of the many declarations made by Secretaries of State and Viceroys of India from 1917 to 1941 are collected together in the following pages. It will be found that the recognition that the Scheduled Castes are a separate and important element in the national life of the country and that their consent is necessary are in no way new proposals. Both the statements have been made by responsible representatives of His Majesty's Government, viz., the Secretary of State and the Viceroy long before the Cripps's proposals came into being. Particular attention is drawn to Mr, Amery's statement on 14th August 1940 and Lord Linlithgow's statement on 10th January 1940. It is hoped that a perusal of these declarations will enable those who are trying to negative the claim of the Scheduled Castes for political rights to realise that their propaganda is both foolish and malicious.

(1)

Extract from the Montagu-Chdmsford Report on Indian Constitutional Reform—1917.

155. .. , .. We have shown that the political education of the ryot cannot be a very rapid, and may be a very difficult process. Till it is complete, he must be exposed to the risk of oppression by people who are stronger and cleverer than he is : and until it is clear that his interests can safely be left in his own hands or that the legislative councils represent and consider his interest, we must retain power to protect him. So with the depressed classes. We intend to make the best arrangements that we can for their representation, in order that they too may ultimately learn the lesson of self-protection. But if it is found that their interests suffer and that they do not share in the general progress, we must retain the means in our own hands of helping them,

(2)

Extract from the Fifth Despatch of the Government of India dated 23rd April 1919 on the Report of the Southborough Committee on Franchise,

13. We have analysed in the statement (printed at the top of the next page) the interests which in the committee's opinion should be represented by non-official nomination.

We accept these proposals generally. But there is one community whose case appears to us to require more consideration than the committee gave it. The Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms dearly recognises the problem of the depressed classes and gave a pledge respecting them. "We intend to make the best arrangements that we can for their representation." The castes

described as "Hindus—others" in the committee's report, though they are defined in varying terms, are broadly speaking all the same kind of people.

<i>Names of Province</i>	Depressed Classes	Anglo-Indians	Indian Christians	Labourers	Excluded tracks	Military Interests	Industrial Interest other than planting & Mining	Aborigines	Domiciled Bengalis	Others	<i>Total</i>	% of total membership
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Madras	2	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	2	6	5
Bombay	—	1	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	2	6	9
Bengal	1	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	22	5	4
United Provinces	1	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	6	4
Punjab	—	2	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	2	9	7
Bihar and Orissa	1	1	1	1	—	—	1	1	—	2	9	9
Central Provinces	1	1*	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	1	5	7
Assam	—	1*	1	1	1	—	—	—	—	1	6	9
Total	7	7	6	4	8	1	1	1	1	14	47	—

*Europeans and Anglo-Indians.

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